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## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

## 1-7 (Canceled)

- 8. (Currently amended) A method of nucleic acid delivery to target cells of a subject comprising the step of administering a conjugating agent-nucleic acid complex where the conjugating agent comprises A-R<sub>1</sub>-Q-Z; where A-R<sub>I</sub> is a cholesterol derivative selected from the group consisting of cholestanol, coprostanol, glycocholic acid, chenodeoxycholic acid, desoxycholic acid, glycochenodeoxycholic acid, taurocholic acid, and taurochenodeoxycholic acid; where Q is a sulfur, nitrogen, or oxygen; and Z is a six amino acid chain of arginine polyionic peptide.
- 9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein said administration is oral.
- 10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein nucleic acid of said complex is expressed as a protein in said target cells.
- 11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein said protein is secreted from said target cells.
- 12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein said protein is of a class selected from the group consisting of: proteases, pituitary hormones, protease inhibitors, growth

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factors, cytokines, somatomedians, chemokines, immunoglobulins, gonadotrophins, interleukins, chemotactins, interferons, and lipid-binding proteins.

- 13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein nucleic acid of said complex is selected from the group consisting of: DNA, RNA, mRNA, miRNA, ribozyme, and antisense sequences.
- 14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein said complex is administered as part of a pharmaceutical composition.
- 15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 14 wherein said pharmaceutical composition comprises an active therapeutic compound.
- 16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15 wherein said therapeutic compound is selected from the group consisting of: an antibiotic, a gamma or beta radiation emitting species, an anti-inflammatory, an antitumoral, an antiviral, an antibody, a hormone, an enzyme, antigenic peptide and antigenic protein.

## 17-18 (Canceled)

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein said target cells are gastrointestinal cells.

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20. (Currently amended) A nucleic acid delivery composition comprising a conjugating agent-nucleic acid complex having the formula:

$$A-R_1-Q-Y-Z$$

where A-R<sub>I</sub> is a cholesterol derivative selected from the group consisting of cholestanol, coprostanol, glycocholic acid, chenodeoxycholic acid, desoxycholic acid, glycochenodeoxycholic acid, taurocholic acid, and taurochenodeoxycholic acid; where Q is sulfur, or oxygen; where Y is a linker peptide having a negative, neutral, or positive charge consisting of glycine, asparagine, serine, threonine, and alanine residues; and where Z is a six amino acid chain of arginine polyionic peptide.

- 21. (Canceled)
- 22. (Previously presented) The composition of claim 20 wherein said cholesterol derivative is a deoxycholic acid.
  - 23. (Canceled)
  - 24. (Previously presented) The composition of claim 20 wherein said Q is oxygen.
  - 25-29 (Canceled)

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30. (Previously presented) A commercial package comprising a composition of A-R<sub>1</sub>-Q-Z according to claim 8 as an active ingredient together with instructions for the use thereof as a nucleic acid delivery agent to a subject.